

**WEST POINT, NEBRASKA**

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**2012**

**Mayor:** *Marlene Johnson*

**Council Members:** *Debra Ell*  
*Bruce Schlecht*  
*Jerry Hugo*  
*Tom Swenson*  
*Roger Paus*  
*Rick Grovijohn*

**City Administrator:** *Thomas Goulette*

**City Attorney:** *Robert D. Moodie*

Adopted by the City Council on February 2, 2012.

## **Overview**

Nebraska's voters enacted a constitutional amendment in November 1990 granting cities and villages the power to use local sources of revenue for economic or industrial projects and programs. In 1991, the Unicameral implemented this amendment with the passage of Legislative Bill 840, the Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act.

The Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act is based on the premise that communities should use their tax dollars in ways that best meet local needs. While ongoing planning processes in many communities have identified development, job creation and increased economic opportunity as their highest priority for the future, a variety of constitutional and legislative prohibitions have kept some communities from investing local public funds in development programs. The removal of these limitations gives municipalities greater latitude in determining and acting upon local needs.

As communities have witnessed population declines and the movement of younger people to other communities and other employment opportunities, such communities have considered their futures and the types of actions and investments needed to reverse these past trends. At the same time, smaller towns and cities are beginning to realize a period of significant opportunity. In a period of uncertainty, complexity and growing concern about the problems and quality of urban life, including cost and relative safety, the advantages perceived to be offered by smaller communities have become uniquely attractive. Concurrently, the revolution in information and communication technology as well as goods distribution has reduced the isolation of small towns. As a result, it is increasingly possible to operate a significant business in growth areas outside of major urban areas.

## **Economic Development Strategy**

The community and economic development strategy for the City of West Point (the "City" or "West Point") involves building on our City's strengths to promote the expansion of existing industries and the accompanying creation and retention of jobs and to recruit new industries and new jobs to the community. The principal strategy is directed at maintaining a good quality of life, building a strong workforce developing community resources, attracting new capital investment, broadening the community's tax base and ensuring economic stability and viability for the City.

Economic diversification will continue to be a critical priority for the City. Diversification will be strengthened by the recruitment of new business from inside and development of new businesses from outside the City. An economic development program can establish the City as a nurturing environment for small and large businesses alike and provide economic opportunity. This atmosphere, in turn will encourage people with skills and ideas to move or return to the City to live and conduct business.

In addition to recruitment, the City can create job opportunities by helping existing businesses in the City to expand their markets and compete more successfully. The successful marketing of the City as a center for opportunity is important to the City's effort to expand its labor force and attract new residents.

The City recognizes that the attraction of new business and industry to a community, or the expansion of existing business or industry, takes place in a very competitive market place. In

order to keep the City as competitive as possible in that market place, the community will strive to use financial and human resources available in a partnership with federal, state, municipal and private sources.

### **Statement of Purpose, General Intent and Goals**

It is the intent of the City to implement an Economic Development Program with the purpose and goals as follows:

- Broaden Tax Base
- Create New Jobs
- Attract New Capital Investment
- Generate Employment Opportunities
- Expand Labor Market

It is important in the preparation of the economic development plan, that in addition to soliciting specific input for the plan that an effort is made to ensure consistency with other plans and goals of the City.

As such, the City's Comprehensive Plan has been reviewed and has been taken into consideration. The objective of the Comprehensive Plan is to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the City by providing harmonious development with coordinating layouts for the subdivided area and proper arrangements of streets and utilities. The plan also calls for adequate sanitary facilities and for the reduction of flood damage potential to the greatest extent possible.

### **Eligibility**

Eligible activities under the Economic Development Program may include, but shall not be limited to the following:

1. The purchase of real estate, options for such purchases and the renewal or extension of such options.
2. Expenses for business recruitment activities.
3. Expenses for attracting and locating a qualifying business into the area.
4. Equity investment or loan guarantees in a qualifying business.
5. The authority to issue bonds pursuant to the act.
6. Grants or agreements for job training.
7. Small business development, including expansion of existing businesses.
8. The eligible activities described above are considered priority activities for the use of funds generated under the local Option Municipal Economic Development Act. The City recognizes that the attraction of new businesses to a community or the expansion of existing businesses takes place in a very competitive market place. In order to keep the City as competitive as possible in that market place, and in the creation of new jobs in the area, the City retains the right to include as eligible activities those additional activities allowable by law under the Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act.
9. The Local Option Municipal Economic Development Act has been changed in several Legislative sessions since it was signed into law on June 3, 1991. It is reasonable to assume the law will change during the course of the City's Economic Development Program. This plan is written with the intent that future changes which may broaden

the potential uses of revenue for economic development projects that are beneficial to the City and citizens of the City, are expressly included in the plan.

### **Eligible Businesses**

A qualifying business shall mean any corporation, partnership or sole proprietorship that derives its principal source of income from and of the following:

1. Retail;
2. The manufacturing of articles of commerce;
3. The conduct of research and development;
4. The processing, storage, transport or sale of goods or commodities which are sold or traded in interstate commerce;
5. The sale of services in interstate commerce;
6. Headquarter facilities relating to eligible activities as listed in this section;
7. Telecommunication activities;
8. Tourism-related activities;
9. Any other business deemed as a qualifying business through future action of the legislature.

A qualifying business does not have to be located within the territorial boundaries of the City if the City Council determines that there is a clear economic benefit to the City. Eligible qualifying businesses may apply more than once and receive program benefits more than once.

### **Budget**

This section describes a preliminary source of funds and budget for the City's Economic Development Program. It is important to note that this budget must be developed annually and may be modified from time to time by the City Council. In the field of economic development, it is impossible to anticipate every condition or requirement. The City should maintain the flexibility to respond to specific requirements and opportunities on a short-term basis.

### **Proposed Funds to Be Collected and Length of Time the Plan will Exist**

The City's source of public funds for the Economic Development Program will be a portion of a proposed added ½ of 1% sales tax to be voted as an added tax to the presently approved 1% local option sales tax. This ½ of 1% sales tax allocation will be planned to remain in force for a period of fifteen years, beginning on October 1, 2012. Uncommitted funds and revenues including but not limited to repayment of loans, return on investments, fees for activities such as loan guarantees, and sales proceeds from properties, may continue to be used for activities contained within the Economic Development Program for an additional 10 year period.

### **Preliminary Budget**

Economic Development

Up to \$134,500 Annually

The City shall establish an Economic Development Fund not to exceed \$134,500 annually. Revenue derived from the local option sales tax shall be collected and placed into this fund as approved annually by the City Council. Any proceeds from the issuance of bonds to provide funds to carry out the Economic Development Program shall be deposited in this fund. Any proceeds from land or building sales will be placed in the Economic Development Fund and will

be used to carry out the Economic Development Program. The City shall not transfer or remove funds other than for the specific uses outlined in this plan.

### **Bond Authority**

The City may have a business opportunity or other economic development projects that require initial funds that exceed the single year proceeds of the local option sales tax. In order to take advantage of such an opportunity, the City should have the ability to issue bonds. Future sales tax receipts then retire these bonds. The City Council may authorize the issuance of bonds to carry out the Economic Development Program, following a public hearing.

### **Administrative Process**

The intent of the City is to utilize the West Point Chamber of Commerce and/or Cuming County Economic Development to administer the Economic Development Program. In conjunction with the City, an Advisory Committee is planned to administer the application process of the program. The committee shall consist of 7 residents from the City who shall be appointed by the Mayor, subject to approval from the City Council. At least one member of committee shall have expertise in the field of business finance or accounting. The Mayor, with the approval of the City Council will designate an appropriate City Official to assist in the administration of the Economic Development Program.

The City may contract with the West Point Chamber of Commerce and/or Cuming County Economic Development or other entities to provide staffing and other support services to assist the Advisory Committee in the administration of the plan.

The Advisory Committee will meet to review applications on an as needed basis; they will also meet on a quarterly basis to review the progress of the Economic Development Program. The committee will report its findings and suggestions to the City Council periodically.

The City Council may assign additional responsibilities necessary to carry out the program or program changes as dictated by changing project needs and economic conditions.

### **Application Process**

To be considered for financial assistance through the City's Economic Development Program, applicants must provide the following information:

1. A detailed description of the proposed project.
2. A business plan that includes employment and financial projections, current financial statement, financing requirements for the project and total projected costs.
3. A complete City Local Option Municipal Economic Development Program application.

The Advisory Committee will review applications in the order they are received. Approval/disapproval of an application will be based on project feasibility and the potential future economic benefit that the project will provide to the community.

Applications that are approved by the Advisory Committee will be subject to a financial verification process. The financial verification process will be completed prior to the application being presented to the City council for approval.

### **Administration of Economic Development Program**

It is the intent of the program that the majority of the funds are used to support eligible activities and that only a minimal amount is spent on administrative costs. The administration of this program will be shared by three separate entities. The entities are as follows: City Council, Program Administrator and the Citizens Advisory Review Committee.

### **Program Administrator – To Be Determined**

1. Will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the program.
2. Will assist applicants and recruit potential applicants.
3. Will serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Advisory Committee and will provide the Advisory Committee with all necessary advice and information.

### **City Council**

1. Will have final authority on expenditure of funds in support of the economic development program.
2. Will have ultimate responsibility for the Economic Development Program.
3. May contract with an organization to act as Program Administrator and will approve the membership of the Advisory Committee

### **Confidentiality, Laws and Regulations**

To ensure applicant confidentiality, the following measures will be instituted and enforced.

1. Each member of the Advisory Committee (including ex-officio members) will sign a “Statement of Confidentiality”.
2. Applicants business and financial information will be available to the Advisory Committee during the approval/disapproval process only.

### **Purchase or Option to Purchase Land**

If the purchase or option to purchase real estate is proposed, the following criteria will be applied:

1. the property shall be properly zoned without any excessive easements, excessive covenants or other encumbrances;
2. The property will conform to the City’s or County’s comprehensive plan, and
3. Selection of sites will be based upon sound economic development location criteria or specification for special projects.

Proceeds from the sale of real property purchased pursuant to the Economic Development Program shall be returned to the City’s Economic Development Fund for future use.