

Visioning 2026, Workforce/Demographics Focus Group
November 21, 2006
6:30 pm at the Chamber

Attendees: Gary Blinn, Kathie Means, Craig Kinsella, Kendrick Marshall, Don Polodna, Jennifer Adams, Lori Spurlock, Mike Brogan, Greg Heinemann

Mike welcomed the participants and gave a summary of the Visioning 2026 process and what the goals are for the community and NE Nebraska. He stated that this is a multi-county challenge; we are not looking just at Norfolk.

Group was then asked to review the sixteen trends on the white board, this information and more is available on the website.

Group was asked:

1) Of the trends listed, identify the five trends most likely to impact on tourism and recreation. Discussion was made on the following trends identified by the group.

And also to consider the following questions during dialogue:

2) How will these trends affect tourism and recreation?

3) What other trends or weak signals do we see now that will cause us to alter the ways we think about tourism and recreation?

4) What problems or pitfalls might those in tourism and recreation anticipate having to deal with because of these trends?

Discussion: One challenge of our area is the significantly aging population, our area's aging is approximately 20 years faster than the balance of the country and we need to consider what challenges we will be facing, also how do we keep our youth here, continuing living and working in NE Nebraska and not running off to the big city. Also, how do we work with retiring business owners and our youth in retaining existing businesses? Due to the advances made in healthcare people are living longer, many of our older population retire and live for 20 more years, They take a part time position either within their business or take a job for someplace else. How do we get more of our aging population back into the work force? Statistics show that people are receiving social security and still working as much as they want to, they feel

Mike: New attitudes of the youth about their job and expectations, what do you see as the younger generations' work ethic?

Gary B: Kids don't want to live on the plains; they want mountains, water and warmth. Starting off Nebraska has three strikes against from the start because these kids can go anywhere they want to find a job and the businesses will go there too. Out migration has been going since the 1890's and is nothing new for our area. We need to do something that is radically different to bring jobs to the area and bring and retain our youth. Giving incentives, making it worth while for someone to start or bring a new business to our area may attract our youth into staying or returning.

Mike: How can we best advertise ourselves? Maybe we could use some type of clever marketing to get the attraction of those outside of the state and make Norfolk, Nebraska a place to come to and stay.

Kendrick: Our agency is struggling to find qualified candidates to fill current positions, we encourage potential employers to add what the city and area can offer to enhance the open position. What we may need to consider is targeting our search to people who would want to live here, such as hunters, fisherman, etc. to move here to work. Not only the quality of life is good, it's a good place to raise your kids, but the hunting and fishing is pretty good too.

Kathie said she visited with an Australian entertainer recently who has traveled all over the country and asked him what he felt his favorite state to visit was, and he stated Nebraska, because it reminded him most of Australia. Maybe we should market ourselves as the place to live as well as work.

Jennifer D.: Convenience of commuting could be a draw to our area, less travel time to get to where you want to go and back, such as grocery store, movies, work. People can go home for lunch.

Gary G: Omaha had an advertising campaign twenty years ago: "Omaha doesn't have the highways that L.A. has and that's not the only good thing about Omaha". These were run in airline magazines.

Kathie: How did Omaha get ConAgra?

Greg: They were giving consolidation incentives to stay here along with Union Pacific and others. There was a lot of trade offs involved in the consolidations, new jobs created, existing jobs eliminated. Nebraska is a good place for distribution industry.

Mike: Online communication has allowed for telecommuting, we can live here and work from home somewhere else such as Kansas City.

Don: Bring in new small businesses by offering tax incentives as well as advertising our lower cost of living, lower crime rate and a good education system.

Greg: Satellite communications connects us to diverse media and the rest of the country. Norfolk has positioned them selves to take advantage of satellite communications and offers the residence of NE Nebraska a good variety to choose from, including a fiber optic communication system. Currently, physicians are using satellite diagnostic technology to analyze patients (X-rays) from other communities and treat those patients. Two of our physicians are currently using this type of diagnostics in the ER, emergency online assistance.

Kathie: The diversity of our physicians (foreign), is this something we need to look at? Why do they leave? How do we get them to stay? Do we do enough to make them feel welcome so that they want to stay? Do their families feel apart of the community, are they taking ownership in the community?

Kendrick: We need to change how we see our selves and our state. Recently while listening to an Omaha radio station, heard the state of Michigan advertising to make the move to Michigan and here is what we can offer you to live here. Why can't we do something like this? Colleges are advertising where can you go with a degree from a state college, From Nebraska to Madrid Spain, from Nebraska to away. The concept of the advertising is to get a good education from us but then get out. Instead of advertising get your education here and see the world on that education, let's get them to stay here with that education. Parents are telling their children to leave, once they get their education.

Jennifer D: This has always been happening in our area, youth want to get out of wherever as soon as they can, however, now we are talking about it more and more and keeping it in more in the fore of the consciousness it's becoming like a self fulfilling prophecy; If kids are thinking

it and as adults we are validating it by repeating it further, it becomes more likely to actually happen as opposed to youthful flight of fancy. And then when we say that the top 10 don't stay, then that makes it sound like only the dummies stay.

Kendrick: We need to change the whole mindset.

Mike: The Norfolk Daily News has been running articles about people in their mid twenties coming back to Nebraska; it's not a bad place to raise a family and to live. Parents want their kids to sow their oats, but don't forget to come back.

Kathie: I explained to my 90 year old mother what we were doing and asked if she had any wisdom on the subject and she said, "it's just like it use to be, how do we keep them on the farm?" It's been going on for a long time. Maybe we need to accept that this is the way that it is, and look at it differently, how can we capitalize on the global economy?

Mike: in the late 60's early 70's a group of Norfolk Businesses didn't like how the city had become stagnate and began the process of bringing in new industry, such as Nucor. They took ownership in the community and worked to make it a better place, how do we get the youth to do this? If Ag is what we are good at, maybe we should start with that?

Don: The problem with that is we live in an Ag community, it is very physical, and kids today don't like the physical part of it. Kids coming out of college today want a starting salary of \$ 60,000.00, that's where they want to start. If they make 60,000.00-80,000.00 they can travel anywhere, but if they make 30,000.00 they only have Omaha to go to, because they do not have extra funds. We need to solicit companies will give and generate higher paying jobs into the area so that we can grow on that side of it, our youth will want to stay and come back.

Kendrick: This is a misconception, if I lived in New York, I would have to make six figures just to live there, we have a lower cost of living here.

Don: You could get a six figure income to live there, our cost of living is lower but, we don't have the careers options for making 60,000 to 100,000 for that individual that has a bachelors degree and has at least 5-years experience and is motivated to be a leader. We don't have that here, unless you want are a self starter and want to start your own businesses, but we don't have the masses to sell to, unless you go to the web. That's what I see our focus should be, we won't get anyone to come back here unless we have the 60,000.00 jobs available here.

Jennifer D: Don makes a very good point, and I think that it is a near term concern, but I think that the long term issue will be somewhat self correcting in as much as telecommuting is in the future, people who live in Atlanta don't mind the commute time but I see that in the future they will move to more isolated areas and telecommuting to work most of the time and that's were Norfolk can take advantage in the future, we can say work in Atlanta but live in Norfolk and that's when I think those jobs will appear, not necessarily Norfolk based, but their paychecks will be focusing on Norfolk and they will be shopping here and their families will be based here.

Don: I am optimistic, I don't want to sound pessimistic, and in 2026 our savior will be our water. There are shortest to the west and we will gain industries. We have great water resources, industries will migrate here in the future.

Gary B: Fine tuning what we have is not going to fix anything, we need to make drastic changes, and small fixes will not work. Spoke with the Governor recently and told him we need to consider different types of industries, such as the more dangerous jobs, like skydiving, rock climbing, things like that. We have driven a lot of those companies out of the US, What would happen if we say it must be manufactured here, sold here and covered under Nebraska law, then liability parallels the US army. This would open up all kinds of possibilities.

Mike: Maybe we are looking at the wrong types of industries to bring to town, maybe we need more diversity in the industries we area recruiting. New technology is changing industry, less human interaction needed to do the work, get things done rapidly, how do we consider this for the future?

Kathie: Current tax structure may be hurting us without us realizing it, businesses go some where for the incentives, burn them up and move on to someplace with new incentives.

Greg: We are getting out of the Warehouse mentality, adjusting our thinking to just an "in time mentality". How do we capitalize on this new trend, more cost effective to build as is needed than to store inventory.

Kathie: Wal-Mart does this, they don't order something in until the instant it is sold.

Craig: I agree, we need something big, what about what Cetron said about a theme park, supplemented by pheasant hunting, something unique, can't be like anybody else. We could also target fisherman and other outdoor sports, along with the skydiving manufacture. This is what Branson, MO did. Book, "Artificial Intelligence" talks about all the potential that could come from AI and all the new science to make life better. We can also spin off on our healthcare providers somehow.

Mike: In the Healthcare Focus Group, they discussed creating a center of excellence here with Faith Regional as the jump off point.

Jennifer A: Recently asked a Foreign national doctor about his acclimating to this area and he was acclimating fine because he was virtually in his own little world at the hospital, but his wife was struggling. How? She missed the finer things, such as the ballet, the symphony and it is really tricky to by Proda in Norfolk.

Don: They feel out of place here, we can't afford that here.

Jennifer: How do we offer the symphony in this offer, maybe Wayne State could offer a curriculum around cultural entertainment somehow?

Mike: could that be included in your self correcting thing, that as the area grows we will see more and more expansion into the arts?

Kendrick: It would be easier to build a theme park, then to find the talent base to support the arts.

Mike: Omaha's Qwest center is bringing in big name acts, who previously had not considered coming to Omaha before and Divots, with their recent summer tour has brought in new acts to the area, not previously seen before.

Kathie: Why can't we revitalize the airport, people travel from coast to coast in smaller planes and could use our airport as a fuel stop, but while they are refueling they could be dining at a nice restaurant. Area residents could also frequent the restaurant, and watch the planes come and go. We would need to promote all across the country.

Greg: A lot of people say we don't have the transportation accessibility here, but if we build something like the airport idea, those people with the smaller taxi styled planes could set up here and taxi people from this area to were they need to go, such as Chicago, Kansas City, to that this could be an and/both situation. You could conceivably build something for the people to stop over and then expand that to getting the people here where they need to go.

Mike: We to develop our amenities, but as Craig and Greg stated, we need to do something big as well. Whether it be something big or unique, we are going to have to reply on partnerships with the government and industry to bring in new businesses.

Kathie: Do we need to keep government involvement limited?

Mike: It will have it's advantages, it's unavoidable as we are the government after all, especially when we turn out to vote, we need to let our voices known to those we elect into office.

Kathie: If Saudi Arabia can build a sky resort in the middle of the desert, we should be able to come up with something. It needs to be something that can be done year round.

Jennifer D: What about the concept of a dude farm let them milk a cow, drive a tractor, etc.

Gary B: We hosted foreign exchange kids who got a big kick out of farming that was one of the reasons they came.

Mike: The five areas that seem to be coming up most are:

- 1) Global Economy (becoming part of the), (by using) Internet and Virtual Workforce (Very similar to 1st two)
- 2) GenXr's and Millennials, (considering the wants and needs)
- 3) Transportation, (both locally and regionally)
- 4) Population Trends (the aging population trends)
- 5) Symbiotic Relationships/Partnerships (government relationships and partnerships and beyond with different groups partnering together)

Kathie: a lot of people looking to move here are looking for a slower pace.

Don; I can see Energy Alternatives as one to be considered. There is going to be an ethanol explosion. Need to become more cost effective.

Mike: Energy development or energy usage, can this go with transportation?

Jennifer D; we should consider education as this is the vehicle that gets us to virtual workforce/workplace/life style changes. We need to educate this area to fill those job roles in the future.

Don; Are you referring to the Nursing college, where someone from this area can go to get a 4-yr degree and continue on to receive their masters and so on, this allows those students to receive their education here and remain here after graduation.

Greg; people need to have the opportunity to continue their education, to keep up with the changes going on in their individual jobs. The ethanol industry is having a problem filling their positions because there is no one in this area that knows how to do this type of work.

Jennifer D; it's not just at the collegiate level, retailers in the area have stated that a lot of high school kids can't count change, and their communication skills are also lacking.

Mike; Can we based, on what we have discussed, take advantage of some of the trends we see here and formulate a plan, to make the employable client better? Or bring people back to this area, or bring people in from other states?

Don; Jay Knobbe has started something new, talking to people about coming back. How do we attract new workforce, young and old to stay in our area or come back? The Norfolk Area Recruiters is a good group, we need to look into how we can grow and expand this organization.

Kendrick; as a member of the NAR, this is an edgy forward thinking program, just in its infancy, has potential to expand to cover all of Nebraska. As the networks grow and grow this could expand into the Nebraska Area Recruiters.

Mike: Has anyone had dealings with new hires from out of the state? And upon refusal do they give the reasons why?

Greg: Attempted to do bilingual hiring due to the expansion of the bilingual population and at this point we don't have home grown people that have the skills required, we talk to those from other states and bring them here, however, this group of professionals lack the (Hispanic) professional community relationship and socialization here that they had prior to moving to this area.

Kathie; Wife and family need to feel they have social activities in the community or they will not consider leaving where there are at.

Gary; when we moved back from Hong Kong, many people said to me that they bet I was glad to have my kids in a good education system. My reply would be, yes they are in a good school, but they were in an excellent school and they would turn and walks away, no one asks, really?

What do they do that we don't do here? How do we benchmark our educational system against the best educational systems? I approached our superintendent of schools and can you name some of the best prep schools in America? If you don't know the top schools then you don't know how to benchmark. Wayne State and the University and the education system should encourage people to be more imaginative. When people come here they ask "how is the education system here?" Oh, we got a good school. But what if we said we have a boy's school, we have a girl's school, we have a geek school, we have an art school, that's really different. And that's nothing we have a multi-cultural school where kids learn Spanish well, where half the day is in Spanish and half the day is in English. We have nine buildings so we could do this but, they are timid to consider doing something like this, we are not better than anyone else in the area.

Mike: It is good to have a variety and diverse group of people coming together such as this group to bring to consideration new ideas and look at what others are doing better than we are. Look at our uniqueness and polish it off and show case. That's what we need to find out, and then promote it whether it is education or workforce or recreation.

Kathie; Is it best to concentrate on one thing, and do that really well, such as education or transportation? Or do we try to do a few things?

Mike; personally we are going to have to do a lot of things, but it is going to take a lot of people to do a lot of things. And so you are going to have these various compartments, hopefully, all working together in these relationships. You will have a group who's emphasizing the transportation structure and the need to enhance that, and you will have one group will be working on trying to develop our healthcare systems and people working on our industry and so forth and then all working, hopefully towards the same goals. This particular group will be, after the break, looking at two or three specific recommendations to be brought to other institutions on what we should do, we won't putting a value on it or prioritizing them, but to give them some specific ideas on what we can work at to make the industrial or workforce or demographics climate better in the next 20 years. We will be starting to lay the ground work and for that we will be taking some very high level value judgments here and that's pretty much where this has to start. So be thinking about, based on some of the five areas that we have been narrowing down to, which is now looking more towards education and linking that with our attempts of bringing the best quality workers to our area and keep them here and keep our citizenry informed about the rest of the world and the big part of that is the media and on line services. Any last words that anyone would like to bring up?

Don; the one trend that I have heard coming up again is that our aging population and healthcare system is the biggest employer in town and I think that will continue. You can get into seeing a doctor in this community within an hour and I think beside education, we need to look at healthcare as another key factor here.

Jennifer A; Reading a handout excerpt of a book Sixteen Trends: Their Profound Impact on Our Future; "What will we do tomorrow?" By the year 2015 more than half, some argue over 80% of us will be working at jobs that don't exist yet. Many jobs will be made obsolete sooner than later. All this is important to educational institutions and as countries concerned about our economic future. Fast changing careers hit close to home because we define ourselves, at this in part by what we are do for a living. Job descriptions are subtitles of the culture. To me that is a big question. Also handed out were descriptions of new jobs that may be created such as: Cybrarians, these librarians of the internet will try to get

this fountain of information even better organized as it expands at more than a million pages a day. I think I would like to be a Web Gardeners; they keep web sites planted, weeded, inviting and perfectly maintained. Robotic Engineers, Astrogeologists. How do we prepare our area for these kinds of jobs? What qualities and skills we will need to be employable, what ever jobs they hold? I think that is what we need to be looking at.

Mike; Many of the jobs that high school kids are shooting for have not been invented yet.

Kendrick; Wayne State College asked me to speak on future jobs so I spoke to the students about math and about science to prepare themselves for those jobs that have not been created yet.

Kathie; maybe we should be paying kids to take math and science instead of working at McDonalds.

Greg; we need an adaptable education system; teach the kids what they need to know so graduates can create their own jobs. Twenty years ago when people said look into jobs in the computer field they did not see how diverse this would become and all the creative things that have come from the computer field. It goes back to education and those basic building blocks, if they can be adaptable, because there is probably not going to be a large number of manufactures coming into Norfolk. We were real lucky with Nucor and Goodyear, they will be looking for creative people who will build from the ground up create new jobs within those organizations.

Kathie; isn't that the definition of success? Find a need and fill it?

Kendrick; Even Nucor better be careful because there are things coming like bio-steal, they are going to have to stay agile.

Jennifer A; A lot of the new jobs will be service, but they are high touch, high people, it's not going to be so much tele-commuting, those will be tools that you use, but it is going to need to be relational, it needs to be care giving types of jobs that's where the money will be going into and it will also be time, how much time people perceive that they will have to take care of themselves, and they will be outsourcing that.

Lori; Money will be exchanged for time, people who will be rewarded for that will be the people who are the most creative around making services that package bundles that save time, if you are going to look futuristic.

Jennifer A; which we are.

Kendrick; this is totally in line with my thought process, and have discussed this at a dialogue group, where we pay people for being at a job for x amount of hours. I think the whole compensation to work relationship needs to totally change to where you work The are doing this to an extent, they are paying guys to move this many boxes and when you are done, you go home regardless of the time it takes them, they get one days pay. So if they get done early, they benefit. You pay me for just as hard as I want to work. There is going to be more work to do and the youth are not willing to sell their soul for the job, there is going to be a need for more production with less people, with less time.

Lori; employer wants to know how many projects I am working on, doesn't need to see me.

Group took break

Mike: Welcome back, we have accomplished a lot, now we need to make our discussion gel a bit more.

This is the time where we decide what ideas we need to present to the public and city for consideration. We need to get the public to talk about these things that they have not considered before. Maybe this is the way to bring the community together by presenting them with some goals, even if they are sky high. Looking at the trend that we have examined and looking at the last two questions on the hand out: can we identify the top two or three actions or accomplishments for workforce/ demographics the citizens of Norfolk and the surrounding area of NE Nebraska should undertake to best benefit from and take advantage of these trends; and specifically, what changes should we implement "world Class" and set us apart from other communities and cities and even the world? Many other communities have done this with fewer resources then we have, we simply have to think, Why not? We have mentioned a lot of things, we need to Reverse Brain Drain and improve our image and make it more attractive to the employment community, we need to take advantage of online services available to allow for virtual workplaces and at the same time make the lifestyle changes to make us more attractive to graduates and finally partnering with other industries and government entities so that we can implement these changes.

Kathie; How do we compare in pay scale with other communities?

Jennifer A; I feel our pay scale is low, when doing recruitment for employers in town, pay scale has been an obstacle in bringing people into this area. And my interpretation to that is that Norfolk employers see themselves as isolated. Small businesses don't see themselves competing with a diverse workforce group including other regions, they think a certain dollar amount should do it for that particular job and they site 3-4 other companies paying the same and they think that is all they need to do, but you can't bring someone in out of Norfolk with that type of mentality.

Kathie; our company has always paid more, because we want those individuals to stay.

Mike; what if the employer can't afford to pay more, such as matching what they pay in Omaha or Kansas City, they may have to lay people off all together.

Jennifer A; I don't think it's an issue of if the employer can afford to pay, I would offer, is it more an issue can the employer afford not to pay. You pay someone at 8.00 or 9.00 dollars and they are going to turn over in a year or eighteen months and then you have go begin the hiring process again and then you have lost the institutional knowledge and everything else that person process during the time that they were there.. I think the employer is way ahead if they pay someone what the larger geographical area pay scale is to retain them for the next 5-years.

Gary; Norfolk employers are remarkably frugal and I think it's to their detriment. The employer could get more sales if they paid someone with the knowledge base more to work for them.

Don; On action I think we need to make is we need to identify top five paying companies in the community and see what we can do to help them expand and grow their business to open up more higher paying jobs.

Kathie; You mean take care of our own

Don; yes, we need to approach them and ask them what can we do, instead of flying all over looking for new companies, we need to identify those companies here and see what we can do to help them expand and grow, which will help the economy of this area.

Jennifer D; I would like to hitchhike on that idea, targeting specifically the two colleges in the area, not only are they larger employers but they are also going to be critical in any growth that will be able to achieve and sustain. Just like Faith Regional the two colleges are kind of posed for that kind of economic growth.

Mike; what of the things that we talked about during the break was if our wages are not competitive, our lower cost of living is, this may help offset the lower wage scale and should be a part of the economic development sales pitch.

Jennifer D; Even factoring our lower cost of living, our pay scale in many respects, is still not necessarily in keeping with the rest of the region, however, there are small employers who are willing to pay more to retain good staff. Some job titles are very well paid, even though you wouldn't think so.

Mike; we need to support the existing large industries, but also consider the young entrepreneur. What can we do for them to encourage that type of activity here?

Jennifer D; speaking from someone who has been self-employed, government issues make, in my opinion, makes it more difficult for the small employer to retain a business, such as taxes. Small business owners are taxed on things, such as a fax machine, whereas the typical person would not be. State and local governments makes it a little difficult for the small start up business to stay afloat.

Mike; Maybe we should be looking to make the business climate better for smaller businesses.

Craig; Just move back to the area from Minnesota and was surprised at what the taxes are here, taxes here on a smaller home are \$300.00 more than what I had. Purchased a car and went to pay the taxes and it and decided to take a look at what the tax base is in Nebraska now and we are in the top 5 of all the states taxes, we are very high. People just don't pay attention; it was such an extreme difference.

Kathie; we have a smaller population base than most states.

Craig; Heard that the governor wants to hold spending down by 3%, where I work, we are all worried about that being a teacher and all that.

Mike; should we consider hiring a lobbyist to promote our interests in Washington.

Craig; the Tax base is going to hurt you if you are looking at bringing new industry to the area.

Kendrick; do we have lower utilities to offset the tax issue?

Don; from a consumer standpoint, Nebraska utilities are one of the lowest in energy cost.

Lori; I would like to go back retouch on something that was discussed earlier. Those entrepreneur types are going to expect a lot more culture and expect a lot more from their services in this area as far as dining and entertainment and what is available for them to do. So if you got those creative minds, how are you going to hold them here? And then there are transportation issues, you are not on an expressway.

Mike; heard on the radio the other day that one of Norfolk's assets is our railway system, which is being used by Vulcraft and Nucor for years and are now looking to that as a selling point. It's a low energy use of limited space.

It's no longer considered an obsolete mode of transportation. Omaha is looking at a starting a trolley system.

Greg; Denver recently has done this.

Craig; Does the big deal fit into this somewhere, do we need to create task force put together to identify something out of the box, new type of venture.

Mike; the tourism group has come up with something that answers that question; they discussed transforming Norfolk into a theme park, creating a river walk from Benjamin Ave. to Hy-Vee East, connecting trails along the river walk throughout the community and eventually connecting to the Cowboy Trail at Taha-Zouka. Expand development of downtown and incorporate festivals new and old, putting capital into town instead of building something on the outside of town. Make Norfolk the draw, not a pass through area. We would also need to consider improving the business climate in this area and utilize our healthcare system infrastructure as part of the package.

Craig; where did Cetron's idea of the theme park come from? The first reaction is, you have to be kidding me, but it is sort of like Branson, people must have thought that was the nuttiest thing ever when it first came up.

Mike; It was probably from something like this

Greg; Part of it was, there is nothing else like it in this area, just as well be here, with changes in energy costs, this could bring tourists to us, how can you come up with an identity. And with the energy costs, you could draw people for a two hour trip, like people from Omaha and Sioux Falls

Mike; if you can bring in the right amenities you can bring the tourist dollars and it can gain a snowball effect on the locality and gain a name for itself in its own right and we will see economic growth for schools and other capacities. If you have good people with good ideas and are successful you will draw in more people and continue to succeed.

Kathie; why don't we utilize the seasonal climate? We could have an ice rink, hockey, cross country skiing.

Craig; if you have four seasons that could be a draw for those who don't.

Greg; The Education focus group stated they would like to utilize the empty school facilities during the evening and weekends for continued education. Is there some other way to think about our communities assets?

Jennifer D; I would like to see greater private enterprise investors to step in to do something big, the big kinds of things are only considered being funded by taxes, but it would be nice to see the local members of the community get behind an idea and invest in it.

Mike; tourist groups suggested enclosed water park so that we could utilize the facility year round, it might be feasible for private industries to fund this. That's a part of this, and it's all good. I am sure we will have in our notes Kathie's' idea about commuter stop over spot for the airline.

Gary; It may become more feasible in the future, air flight now requires highway system in the sky, you really don't fly from point A to point B basically, but as avionics improve in the future, we will be able to go from point to point and this would give every pilot a lot more flexibility.

Mike; where do we need the representation?

Gary; basically the technology is there, but they are not ready to implement this yet.

Kathie; heard a speaker that stated that the 4mil jet will become the 2mil jet

Lori; companies are moving more and more into private corporate travel, they own their own small jet or even smaller taxi plane because airline travel is so expensive, so Norfolk may be right in the midst of jumping onto something big like this here.

Kathie; it goes back to what you said before about time, no security checks, you just jump on your plane and go.

Mike; any other thoughts on this something big?

Lori; I have to live within so many miles of an airport; even though I am virtual I could not live here. It's part of my job description

Craig; this airport idea could attract and bring in other industries

Greg; this could spin off onto something totally different, industries would come here to service those individuals stopping here, such as maintenance and manufactures for the new taxi planes.

Craig; this would be a huge attraction for other industries, let's do them all.

Greg; what sustainability do we see for these ideas? We had things in the past that we don't have anymore because of sustainability. We don't have the Day Christmas displays anymore.

Mike; Sustainability is important Skyview park is a good example of a sustainable idea, they created a lake, park and walking trail out of a farm site. If they could create something similar along the river, that's an infrastructure that is not going to be given up. We need to have some sort of energizing force to get this from the idea stage to an accomplishment.

Kathie; we need to remember that things, such as festivals, go by the wayside, we need to stay flexible, how can we change the mindset, just because we have a building, why do we need to build another, we all have to build something.

Mike; it takes an idea and dedication to see it through along with supporting it once it's complete.

Kathie; how do we get more people on board to have less opposition to our ideas?

Craig; how will the community find out about what was discussed?

Mike; the information will be compiled and presented in a pole. The community will vote on these ideas and prioritize them and the government bodies and businesses will see what the community thinks is important and act on these ideas.

Craig; I heard recently that there is a real need for more E.D. people for this area, there is a lot of part time people, we need more full time Economic Development people working for this area.

Kathie; we have RJ Baker with Elkhorn Valley E.D. Council

Kendrick; we have a lot of entities out there trying to do different aspects of E.D., maybe we need them to work more closely together, form a better partnership.

Craig; they do try to coordinate, but they have different agenda.

Gary; The election really pleased me and many people are happy about the recent election results and with new blood on the city council, maybe we will see a more pro active council then we have seen in the past.

Kathie; Competitive cities down play qualities of other communities to keep or recruit people.

Mike; we may be a genuine threat to Omaha and Lincoln.

Kathie; if we want this, why shouldn't we go out and get it.

Greg; do we need a better connection to government through a lobbyist?

Mike; we are at the end of our time, thank you for all of your valuable comments, a rough draft of the notes will be sent our for your review and respond with anything that should be added,

Jennifer A; please use the website to post thoughts on our blog, get out and spread the word about what you were involved in here tonight. We want to have community involvement and continued community involvement. Hopefully we will have a tangible outcome to get the community involved.

Kathie; there is a lot of apathy in our community, people don't get involved, have they maybe next time mindset.

Jennifer; we are looking for a different kind of involvement, you came tonight

Greg; everyone gets involved in their own time.

Three outcome conclusions and recommendations from the Workforce/Demographics focus group.

They are:

1. Identify the top five (5) employers in the area and ask them what we can do to help them expand and achieve competitive wage schedules.
2. Make the area business climate and taxation system more receptive to large employers and small start-up entrepreneurships.
3. Establish "Something Big" to attract employers and employees to Northeast Nebraska, and keep them here. (Reference is made to the ideas from the Tourism/Recreation Group...it applies to Workforce as well—needed to stop the brain drain.)