



City of Wayne earns Nebraska Diplomat Award

The city of Wayne was named the Community of the Year by the Nebraska Diplomats during a Regional Economic Celebration held last week in Norfolk.

The Nebraska Diplomats traditionally host an event in Lincoln once a year, but this year expanded the celebration to six locations, with the Norfolk event the first.

Wayne was recognized during the day-long event that included information on how the region can work together on issues such as creating stronger economies together, housing and recruiting a quality, skilled workforce.

The State of Nebraska Department of Economic Development shared information on regional collaboration and the potential for a regional industry council in northeast Nebraska.

As part of the event Courtney Dentlinger, Director of the State of Nebraska Department of Economic Development, spoke to an audience of more than 100 business and civic leaders from across the state.

Governor Pete Ricketts presented the Community of the Year Award to Mayor Ken Chamberlain.

The city had submitted a nomination letter for the award, focusing on a variety of projects aimed at developing the city, including the use of TIF and LB840 funds.

Excerpts from the letter are as follows:

"The City of Wayne currently (as of February 2017) has 18 active TIF projects; \$3 million in bonds have been issued with a total TIF valuation of \$13.6 million.

"The Wayne Economic Development Plan (LB 840) for the City of Wayne was passed by the voters in 2008. It is funded by sales tax. LB 840 receives 40 percent of the 1 percent sales tax passed in 2008. The remaining 60 percent is earmarked for capital projects within the City of Wayne. The LB 840 fund has provided financial assistance for 40 different projects since its inception utilizing just over \$3 million.

"In 2015 an additional one-half percent sales tax passed with tremendous community support to fund a new swimming pool, located at the Community Activity Center complex. This provides another amenity to help attract residents to live in Wayne as well as visitors to the community.

"In 2008, the WAED Business and Industry group began planning a 20,000 sq ft spec building in the Wayne Business Park. CDBG funds were leveraged to build a shell building and market it over a four year period. The city added a new street, named

Summerfield Drive, after the late Marty Summerfield, a driving force of the Business and Industry Group. In 2012, Williams Form Engineering purchased the building with 8 total acres and finished the building for manufacturing of rebar and anchors for bridges and wind towers, employing approximately 20 FTE workers. In 2016, Williams Form Engineering announced that the Wayne facility would be expanded by another 40,000 sq ft and add additional jobs and technological advances through their manufacturing processes.

Some of the most recent major projects completed within the city include: Bomgaars, 4th Jug Restaurant and Liquor Store, Providence Medical Center renovation, Wayne State College renovations (Willow Bowl, athletic facilities, US Conn Library, Carhart Science building and Bowen Hall) and a planned Center for Applied Technology building to serve the area.

The City of Wayne keeps building new streets and adding infrastructure, while at the same time, maintains and rebuilds existing streets and infrastructure, notably Windom Street paving- water lines, and storm sewer; Milo Drive - water, sewer, and

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**Wayne was recognized during a
day-long Regional Economic
Celebration held last week in Norfolk.
The event included information
on how the region can work together
on issues impacting the state.**



(Photo by Clara Osten)

Council member Nick Muir and Wayne Area Economic Development Executive Director Wes Blecke pose with the award the city received last week for its economic development efforts.

Award

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paving (Dollar General, Herman Chiropractic and future Hopkins Eye Clinic relocations); Pheasant Run-water and sewer (new Bomgaars building); Aquarius wastewater treatment plant, Bio Solids de-waterization of sludge system, and Wayne Business Park water and sewer mains. The City is also investing to replace and bury many overhead power lines for safety and reliability reasons.

"Corporate citizenship is evident in the response to and reconstruction of our business park and surround-

ing area after an EF-4 tornado hit in the fall of 2013. That involved every segment of the community joining hands to do what they could to bring the community through the recovery process. That process/progress was made possible by the positive community connections maintained long before disaster struck. Even while the community was still recovering, Wayne was the first point of contact when tornadoes again ripped through Northeast Nebraska the following summer. Affected communities of Pilger, Stanton, and Wakefield looked to Wayne as an example of what needed

to be done. As good neighbors, Wayne lent not only our hands, but shared lessons learned along the way.

"Most recently the Nebraska Community Foundation, Wayne Affiliated Fund, was "re-energized" in 2016. The fund in the past has been utilized for specific community projects. Now, with a new leadership team in place, the fund will build towards creating a \$1,000,000 unrestricted endowment for future community needs. Last fall (2016) the fund advisory committee held a visioning session with the community to "flip their dream switch" and come up with ideas to enhance the community now and in the future."



(Contributed photo)

Mayor Ken Chamberlain accepted the award from the Nebraska Diplomats last week in Norfolk during their regional celebration.